ASL Linguistics

Understanding ASL from a Linguistics Perspective

ASL Linguistics

- Scientific study of language.

- Languages are rule-governed communication systems.

- There are many fundamental areas of ASL linguistics inquiries.
  - Our focus is only in three areas:
    - Simple Sentence in ASL
    - Action of Verbs in ASL
    - Depicting Verbs

Simple Sentence in ASL

Basic Word Order

- Root of basic sentence in ASL:

  Subject-Verb-Object (SVO)

- Many people think ASL is messed up grammatical order.

  - Ironically, ASL is formed *just like in ENGLISH!!*

  - However, the grammar of ASL does change based on the type of sentence.

Plain Verbs in ASL

- ## Transitive Plain Verb
  - Allows an object
  - Basic structure: S-V-O

  - Example:
    - LOVE what/who?
    - FATHER LOVE CHILD

- ## Intransitive Plain Verb
  - Does NOT allow an object
  - Basic structure: S-V

  - Example:
    - BOY SILLY FATHER
      (S)   (V)   (O)

      (awkward, is it?)

    - BOY SILLY
      (S)   (V)

Different word orders are possible....

■ <u>Transitive Plain Verb</u>

1) Pronouns replace nouns

               (s)   (v)   (O)

Example: FATHER   LOVE   CHILD

              PRO.3   LOVE   PRO.3*

      (subject pronoun)   (V)   (subject pronoun)

*Used when the people conversing understand the subject

2) Subject with head nodding

                                  _____nd

Example: FATHER LOVE CHILD FATHER (SUBJECT COPY)

                        _____nd

       LOVE   CHILD,   FATHER*

        (V)   (O)   (S)

*Nodding to emphasize that is the subject.

Different word orders are possible....

- ## Intransitive Plain Verb

1) Subject-Verb-Pronoun Copy (S V Pro)

$$\overline{\hspace{2cm}}^{nd}$$

Example: BOY   SILLY   PRO.3 (subject copy)

           (S)   (V)   (pro)

2) Verb – Pronoun (where subject is understood)

$$\overline{\hspace{2cm}}^{nd}$$

Example: SILLY   PRO.3 (subject copy) *

            (v)   (pro)

***ASL cannot allow subject follow the verb: SILLY BOY**

Different word orders are possible....

- ## Topicalization:

  - Drawing attention to important information.

  - By placing the OBJECT at the beginning of the sentence.

  - Must have certain NMS: "Topic Marker"
    - Eyebrow raised
    - Head tilted
    - Slight pause between topic and rest of sentence

  ```
                       _____t
  Example:       CHILD,  FATHER  LOVE
                (object topic)    (S)        (V)


                       _____t
                 PRO.3,    PRO.3   LOVE      (pronoun instead of noun)
                (object topic)    (S)           (V)
  ```

Different word orders are possible....

- ## Indicating Verbs

  - Verbs that can be directed in space.

  - Three possible sentence structures:

    1) No separate signs for S or O

    > *Example:* PRO1-GIVE-PRO2
    >   (s)   (v)   (o)

    2) Separate sign for SUBJECT

    > *Example:* PRO3 TELL-PRO1
    >   (s)   (v)   (o)

    3) Subject pronoun follows verb

    >   _____nd
    > *Example:* PRO1-GIVE-PRO2, PRO1
    >   (s)   (v)   (o)   (subject copy)

Action of Verbs in ASL

Action of Verbs

- ## Inflections of ASL

  - Rich and complex system

  - Using roots in visual natural of ASL

  - Inflection refers to morphemes that add grammatical information.

    - English = adds
    - ASL = changes structure

- ## Signs that inflects the morphemes

  - By changing the movement

  - By changing the sign production

  - By changing the non-manual markers

Changes in Movement

- ## Temporal Aspect:

  - ### Aspect =
    - Information contained inside the predicate.
    - It explains HOW the action of predicate is done.

  - ### Temporal =
    - Reference to time

- ## Most of the movement changes relate to time, therefore are called <u>temporal aspect</u>.

(continued...)

- By changing the <u>movement</u> of the sign and it will change the meaning.

- Examples of Temporal Aspects:
  - CONTINUALLY
    - STUDY, WRITE, SIT, WRONG, SILLY
  - REGULARLY
    - GO, PREACH, SICK
  - FOR-A-PROLONGED PERIOD
    - LOOK-AT, CRY, SIT, STAND, SICK
  - OVER-AND-OVER AGAIN
    - STUDY, LOOK-AT
  - IN-A-HURRY
    - SEW, WRITE, EAT, STUDY

Changes in Sign Production

- By changing the <u>sign production</u> of the sign and it will change the meaning.

- <u>Repetition</u>
  - Indicate that action is repeated
  - Involving a repetition of sign movement
  - Example: INCREASE and INCREASE-repeatedly

- <u>Intensity</u>
  - Indicate how intensely one performs an action
  - Using mood comparing casual and hard
  - Example: WORK   and   WORK-hard

- ## Directionality
  - Indicate the subject and/or object of a verb
  - Direction of its movement
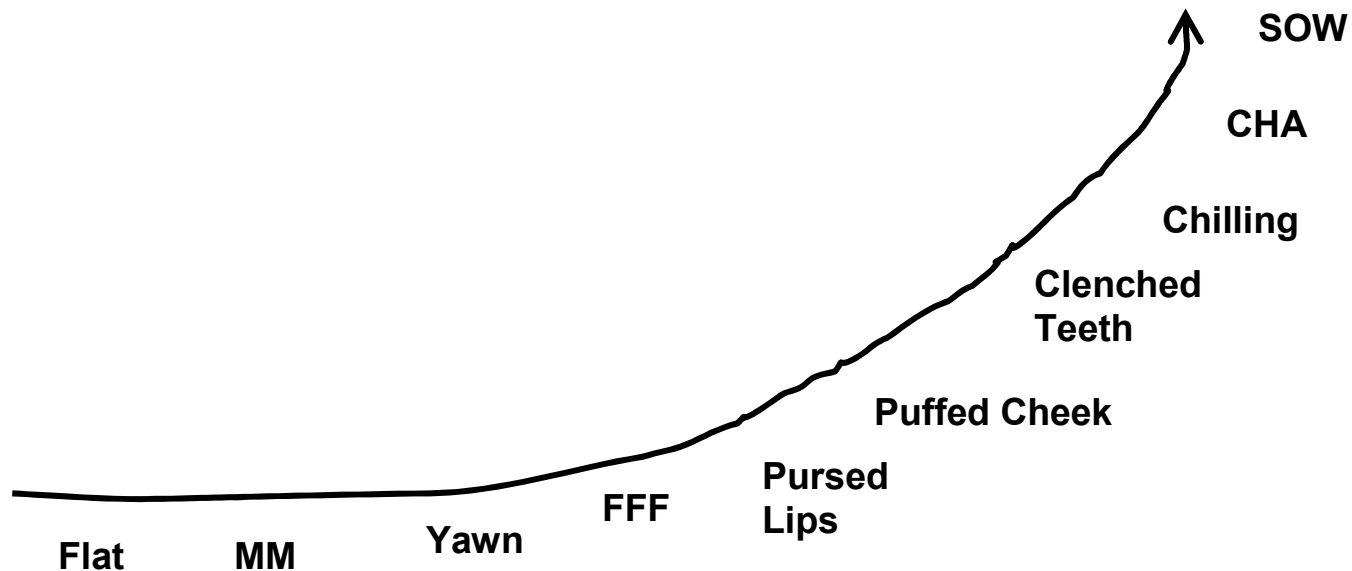 - Example: INFORM   and INFORM-you-all

- ## Combination
  - Any inflections above can be combined
  - Example: STUDY and STUDY-long/hard

Changes in Non-Manual Markers

- By changing the <u>NMS</u> of the sign and it will change the meaning.

- Non-manual markers plays key role in inflections.

- ## <u>NMS Modifiers:</u>

  - Using same sign with NMS variations inflects different meaning

    _____pout   _____sow
  - Example: AWFUL   and   AWFUL

NMS Modifiers

- Show vlog: "SMART" modifiers <u>SMART</u>
  - <u>Inflection degree</u> with mouth movement

SOW

CHA

Chilling

Clenched
Teeth

Puffed Cheek

Pursed
Lips

FFF

Yawn

Flat　　MM

Depicting Verbs

What is the Depicting Verb?

- Formerly called classifier predicates.
    - Renamed by Scott Liddell in 2003

- Classifiers =
    - A handshape used to represent a <u>class</u> of objects.

    - A sign with same handshape but movement, orientation, and location can show different type of predicate.

- Predicate =
    - Saying something *about* the noun phrase is a <u>predicate</u>.

        The boy   <u>is sick</u>
                        (pred)

    - Not limited to VERBS
        - Predicate can be a verb, noun, adjective

3 Types of Depicting Verbs

TYPE 1:
- Show where something is in space.
  - CAR-THERE

TYPE 2:
- Show how something looks or is arranged.
  - HILL

TYPE 3:
- Shows movement or action.
  - CAR-DRIVE-TO
  - CAR-BUMPY-DRIVE-TO

Wrap Up...

- ## Transformational Grammar
  - Coined by Noam Chomsky
  - "Deep Structure" = transformational grammar

- ## Reason for misconceptions about word order in ASL
  - Idea that a sentence has a basic form and other forms of that sentence DERIVE FROM the basic sentence by a series of rule.